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Anti-Slavery.

REV. MR. FISHER'S DISCOURSE

(at Rutland)

ON

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND SLAVERY.

1850.

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND SLAVERY.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT RUTLAND, MASS.,

JULY 14, 1850.

BY

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PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

This Discourse goes before the public, not because it is thought to be worthy of publicity, but in consequence of an unpleasant excitement of which its delivery has been the occasion. The Discourse is as it was originally, with the exception of a few verbal changes, and now and then an additional, illustrative remark. None of its sentiments have been changed, none have been added, and none subtracted. In the delivery, a few remarks were made extemporaneously, which have passed from the author's memory, and which therefore do not appear. But the sermon is the same, and is now left to speak for itself, and to be approved or condemned, according to the different standards of feeling and action which obtain in the community, upon the questions herein discussed. G. E. F.

Q. S. 10/3/11

DISCOURSE.

1 Thess. 5: 21.—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

I have received frequent intimations of the existence of a desire among my congregation, that I would present my views upon certain questions which are now interesting many minds. I refer to questions touching the relations of the church to slavery, or, the duties of christians and christian ministers, in regard to the sin of slavery. I have therefore thought it proper to present my views at the present time, since I entertain no opinions of which I am ashamed, or which I am afraid or unwilling to avow. I shall speak my own sentiments, though perhaps they may not accord with those of any hearer. I shall speak neither to please, nor to displease any one present, but simply with the view of discharging duty to conscience and to God, to whom alone I acknowledge accountability. I take occasion, at the outset, to disclaim all intention of preaching a personal discourse, or of administering a personal rebuke, and if, after this open disavowal, any one shall charge me with such a design, I must regard it as eminently unkind, and unchristian. The Searcher of Hearts is my witness, that I would not injure the feelings of one of my hearers. May I not therefore ask of you all a candid hearing?

So much I deem it important to say by way of introduction.

I now proceed to the subject of discourse, and call your attention,

I. To a few plain propositions, in which I suppose we shall all agree.

1. The church, in its nature and design, is hostile to all sin. It is composed of those who have professedly forsaken sin, and banded themselves together, to accomplish, more effectually, its extermination from their own hearts, and the world. It is a body of believers who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; who are washed, who are sanctified, who are justified in the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Further citations and remarks in support of this proposition are needless, for the friends and foes of the church alike admit the truth of it.

2. If such be the nature and design of the church, then she is bound to oppose, with vigor and constancy, all forms of sin. Not to do this, is to dishonor her high commission,—to prove false to her sacred trust. It is to defeat the very end of her establishment. To bear testimony against every form of evil, and to aim at its extirpation, is a duty which she owes to God, to Christ her Redeemer and Living Head, to the Spirit her Sanctifier, to the holy name she bears, to the high profession she has made, and to the world into which she is cast, as salt, as leaven, as a light, as a reforming and saving power. She is to oppose sin

within and without herself, in high places and in low, in christian lands, and in pagan.

3. All sin is not yet exterminated from the church. She has now existed many thousand years. She has been often subjected to the purifying process of persecution. She has received many baptisms of the Holy Ghost and of fire. She has enjoyed the faithful ministrations of the word. But never yet has a perfect church existed upon earth,—never yet a church of which it could be predicated that she was "without spot or wrinkle." There always has been, there yet is much sin in the heart of every christian, and consequently in the heart of every church. Nor do we expect to find a sinless church, until her wanderings in the wilderness shall cease,—until her warrings with the powers of darkness shall be ended, and she shall reach her state of rest in Heaven. The church in Heaven, and that only, is without sin. The church on earth ought to be so, but we have no ground for rational expectation that she will be so. Therefore, to denounce and forsake her, because she is not sinlessly perfect, is to pursue a most absurd and unchristian course.

4. Slavery is a sin. That it is so in my view, you have been apprized on former occasions. In those expressions of opinion I was sincere, and those sentiments I continue to entertain. I do not bate a jot of them. I would reiterate it again, and yet again, that slavery is a sin, a sin against God and man. It is a violation of human rights. It debilitates the physical powers of its subjects. It degrades the intellectual being. It tramples on the social affections. It blunts and depraves the moral sense. It buys, and beats, and sells the very image of God. It goes counter to every dictate of reason, every suggestion of common sense, and every principle and precept of revelation.

Such is the system, in the abstract, in its general charac-

ter, and spirit, and influence, though I gladly allow that there are cases of exception to the general rule.

5. If it be the duty of the church to oppose all sin, and if slavery be a sin of such magnitude, it follows that the church should lend no countenance to the system, and not only so, but everywhere and always, she is bound to throw the whole weight of her influence against it. If the preceding propositions are established, this follows as a necessary conclusion.

So far, I trust we are all agreed. Wherein then do we differ? If we differ, it is in regard to what constitutes an approving, or countenancing, or fellowshipping of slavery by the church, or in respect to the steps which the church is required to take, in order to be free from the charge of so doing.

This brings forward,

II. The second division of my subject. It is this question: What course must the church pursue, in order to free herself from the just imputation of supporting and fellowshipping the institution of slavery?

In speaking of the church, reference is made particularly to the Congregational Churches of New England, and to our own church as one of them.

1. Must she refuse to recognize that as a christian church, which numbers some slaveholders among its members? In my opinion she is not called upon to take this position. Such a course is certainly in direct hostility to that charity which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,"—that charity which is one of the brightest and loveliest of the christian ornaments.

Again. To adopt such a course, is to unchurch nearly or quite all the churches established by the Apostles themselves. There are a few facts which are facts, and which

therefore cannot be denied or disproved, either by the friends or foes of slavery. The facts are these:

The Apostles did not declare that a slaveholder could not be a christian. They did not demand the immediate emancipation of slaves as an indispensible condition of admission to the church. They did admit slaveholders, and slaveholders in the church were not subjected to immediate discipline for holding slaves. As evidence that these assertions are assertions of truth, let me remind you how often we find the Apostles addressing themselves to members of the church, as still holding slaves. In Ephesians 6: 9, we read, "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening." In Colossians 4: 1, it is written, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." A still more decisive passage is found in 1 Timothy 6: 2. "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren, but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved." Now here is proof positive that there were slaveholders in the Apostolic churches. And here, if we assume and assert that that cannot be a true christian church, which, under any circumstances, includes slaveholders among its members, we declare that the Apostolic churches were not true churches, and this let him declare who will. For one, I do not claim a piety, a conscience, and a judgment, so much more enlightened than those of the Apostles. I have been accustomed to suppose that Paul and his fellows were christian ministers, and established genuine christian churches, and it ill becomes me to excommunicate them from the household of faith.

The force of the above arguments cannot be evaded by the assertion that the slavery and slaveholders of those times were not American. True, the Apostles were in the Roman Empire, and it was Roman Slavery with which they

had to do, but it was *slavery*, and that too, in as severe a form as has ever existed. Nor are we to conclude that the Apostles were in favor of the system, for they inculcated principles which tended directly to its overthrow, thus showing their true sentiments in regard to the evil of it.

Returning from this digression, I would say, that the question before us is not whether it would be right for this church, here and now, in the nineteenth century, amid all the light and knowledge upon the subject by which we are surrounded, to admit to our number, a man, who, though always having dwelt amid this same light and knowledge, yet would voluntarily buy, and hold as property, completely subject to his will, his fellow man, but the question is, whether a church, which, anywhere, in any age, and under any circumstances, admits slaveholders to its communion, forfeits the name and character of a christian church,—whether we should self-righteously declare, as though we were able to mark out definitely just how much sin, under any given circumstances, is requisite in order to destroy all evidence of christian character, that a church numbering a single slaveholder is no true church. This is the question, and the affirmative of it I cannot maintain. I consider it an unrighteous, a pharasaical assumption.

2. Is it the duty of the church, of *this* church, to declare absolutely and unqualifiedly, that no slaveholder shall ever come to her communion-table? Must this church pass a vote to this effect, before she can be exculpated from the charge of being in league with oppression?

Before this question can be answered, there is another which must be settled. It is the question whether the fact of a man's holding slaves, is *prima facie* evidence that he is not a christian. For I take it that we have no right to exclude from Christ's table, any whom, in the judgment of charity, we may regard as Christ's followers, except for a

disorderly walk. When pressed with this question, there are many who reply, "I do not know that a slaveholder *cannot* be a christian, but on the other hand, I do not know that any slaveholder *is*, or *can be* a christian. It requires an amazing stretch of charity for me to believe it." Now to what does all this amount? True I do not *know* positively, that any slaveholder is a christian, neither do I positively know that any particular individual who is not a slaveholder is a christian. I have the best evidence which the nature of the case affords, that there are many christians in this town, but as I cannot fathom the depths of the heart, I have no infallibly sure and certain knowledge of the fact. My want of positive knowledge is as great in one case as in the other, and the objection thus arising, if it can be called an objection, is equally strong in each case. We are to judge according to external evidence, and leave it with God to search and judge the hearts of those who profess to be his.

Now does every slaveholder give certain and conclusive evidence that he is not a christian? Let us meet this question fairly. I answer promptly and plainly, that in my opinion, slaveholding does *not necessarily and always* indicate the absence of the christian spirit and temper. I contend that circumstances do affect, do modify the rightfulness and the wrongfulness of relations and acts.

A course of conduct which in the abstract, is wrong, and which under *most* circumstances, is wrong, may under certain other circumstances be right, or to say the least, be regarded as not inconsistent with a christian character and profession. A certain course of conduct may be expedient at one time, and under certain circumstances, which may be inexpedient at another time, and under different circumstances. I may here be met with the reply, "away with this doctrine of expediency,—it is a device of the devil.

Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and it is always right to do right, and wrong to do wrong." Admitted, freely and fully. But the right must first be ascertained, and in the discovery of it, there must sometimes be a careful consideration of circumstances, or in other words, a regard to expediency.—Any thing which peculiar circumstances render inexpedient, is, for the time being, not right. And it is a fact that all men do recognize the doctrine of expediency, and act upon it. Those who decry loudest against it, as fully regulate their conduct by it, as do others. They never do any thing which they do not consider expedient.

Now can we conceive of any palliating circumstances, which may so far extenuate the guilt of the slaveholder, as to demand of us the recognition of him as a christian brother, and the admission of him to our communion-table if he be providentially present? In my opinion, there are such circumstances.

There are many slaveholders who become such, and continue such, involuntarily. They do not wish to sustain such a relation to their fellow men, and they are longing, and waiting, and praying, that the way and the time may come, when they can put an end to it. And I cannot feel it to be right, to be christian, to denounce unsparingly such men, and to shut them out from the pale of christian charity and sympathy, for their hearts are right,—they are doing all that they can, and who of us is doing more?

But there are others who sustain the relation of masters and owners, voluntarily indeed, but from motives of the purest benevolence. An entire family, perhaps, belong to one master. He gives them instruction in things temporal and spiritual,—in short, he treats them in all respects as though they were free, save that he sustains the relation of master. And this he does more at their own request,

than for any other reason, for if he should set them free, or should depart and leave them, the family circle would be broken, the members scattered and sold apart, and driven off to the plantation of a cruel master, where they would enjoy scarcely one of their present comforts and privileges. And therefore, knowing these things, their present master, from purely benevolent motives, continues the relation which he holds to those slaves, they being, in *all other respects*, freemen. There are actual cases like this. And that relation abstractly considered is wrong, but under the circumstances, I maintain that benevoleuce requires the master to continue it. Though there cannot really be any rightful claim of property in man, yet that master may stand acquitted in the sight of God, and, in the view of gospel love and charity, he ought not to be regarded as guilty of a high-handed crime against God and man, and as an alien from the commonwealth of Israel.

There is still another circumstance which in some cases palliates the guilt of the slaveholder. It is the circumstance of excusable ignorance upon the subject. In former days, days of our common ignorance, many good men manufactured and sold ardent spirits, never dreaming that they were violating the law of love, and they were not regarded as so doing by others. Yet no one doubts that *sincerely pious men* did then and thus violate that law. And so it may be with slavery. Surrounded from their birth with the system, some slaveholders do not intend to violate, and do not once think they are acting contrary to the law of love, so long as they kindly treat those whom they call their slaves. They have not our light, and cannot from their very position, possess the advantages for understanding all the bearings of the subject, which we possess, but they are as conscientious, and as desirous of doing the right, as we can be.

Allow me here to say, that I have a personal acquaintance with one of this class. He was a member of the same theological school with myself. He was universally regarded as a pious, devoted, conscientious christian. He witnessed a good profession. There was no one who did not love him as a truly pious, praying man. And yet he was a slaveholder. In conversations held with him upon the subject, I told him that I regarded slaveholding as a sin, to be repented of before God—I thus bore testimony against the system. He replied, with as honest and conscientious a heart as was ever possessed, that he could not see that he was doing wrong to hold that slave as his property. If he could have seen the wrong, he would have forsaken it. I wonder, and yet I do not wonder at his ignorance of the wrong, for he was conscious of no wrong intention. He has always dwelt in the midst of slavery, and of course been under its blinding influence. He did not view the subject from the same stand point with myself. That brother, though a slaveholder, I believe was a christian. His daily life gave abundant evidence of it, though there was in my view this one dark spot in his character. Notwithstanding this, however, I could not but regard him as a true christian brother, and I regard him in that light now. And I would to-day cordially give him, (not his sin,) the right hand of christian fellowship, and invite him to sit with me at the table of our common Lord and Redeemer. Not to do this, were to do violence to every christian feeling. You may call me pro-slavery, but your calling will not make me so. You may charge me with countenancing and fellowshipping slavery, but I can bear that, knowing how baseless and false the charge would be. I know there is not a throb of my heart but beats high and strong for freedom. I know there is not one of you all, that would utter a louder voice, or labor more untiring-

ly to demolish the strong holds of oppression. Therefore I can bear that stigma. Nay, I would glory in carrying it, to my dying day, if affixed for such a cause. But I could not bear the scorpion stings of conscience which would surely follow, if by any voice or vote of mine, that brother in Christ should be driven away from the table of communion, because I do not think him entirely free from sin.

Now if you should put the general question, whether I would admit slaveholders to our communion, I would reply, first, I have no power to admit or debar, except so far as there is power in one vote. Do you then inquire whether I would do it if I possessed the power? My answer is, that depends upon circumstances. I cannot reply positively, either in the affirmative or negative, irrespective of circumstances. I would inquire whether a slaveholder who should present himself, were involuntarily so, or if voluntarily, whether he appears to be actuated by benevolent motives,—whether the fact of holding slaves is the only objection, he giving good evidence, in all other particulars, of being a new creature in Christ Jesus,—whether he is desirous of seeing the truth, and knowing and doing all his duty,—whether his sin might not be attributed to a want of light and knowledge, which in his circumstances, he could not have acquired, and if I found all these things so, then my feeling would be, let my right hand forget its cunning before it is raised to exclude a follower of Christ from Christ's table. But if I found him, while professing to have the love of Christ in his heart, actuated by selfish motives,—selfishly holding in bonds, and buying, and beating, and selling those for whom Christ died, then I should know of no right to admit him, for he does not exhibit a christian spirit. In admitting those of the former class, I would say to them, "Brethren, I regard slaveholding as a sin. Except in a very few cases, I consider it as wholly

wrong, and I protest against it. I urge you to look at the subject prayerfully, again, and see if you ought not to-day to set your bondmen free;" and by saying these things, I do free myself from the just charge of fellowshipping slavery, although I do not say that I will not accept as a christian, one whom I cannot but suppose Christ has accepted.

Although a system of slavery is everywhere and always wrong, every individual instance of it is not necessarily so. Fellowshipping an individual slaveholder, is not necessarily fellowshipping slaveholding. Jesus Christ knew positively, that Judas had a devil, and yet he sat down with him at the supper. Judas was not indeed a slaveholder, but he was *worse*, for he sold his blessed Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and then delivered him up into the hands of his murderers. Christ knew that all this was in the heart of Judas, and yet he admitted him to the supper, on the ground of his being professedly a friend. But, by thus communing with him, did Christ give countenance to his sin? Did he fellowship that sin? This is a question which it would be well to consider, in this connection.

It is true that slavery ought not to be in the church, but from this it does not follow that no individual slaveholder has a right to be in it.

These considerations entirely satisfy my own mind that neither this church nor any other, is called upon to make a positive announcement, that no man who holds slaves, shall sit down at her table of communion. Nay, a church has no moral right to pass such a vote. It would be to take the ground that something more than credible evidence of piety, of loving the Lord Jesus, is to be required for admission to the church. But this was all that Christ or his apostles ever required. It would be to make our views, and corresponding action upon questions of moral reform, a test of piety,—to set ourselves up as a standard to which

all must come, in relation to such questions, if they would be treated as christians, no matter how penitent for sin they may be, how humble, how believing, how anxious to know, and willing to do their duty. Let him among us who is without sin, cast the first stone at the christian slaveholder.

3. In order to escape the just accusation of fellowshipping slavery, must the Congregational Pastors of New England refuse all christian and ministerial intercourse with Pastors and Ecclesiastical Bodies in slaveholding states? Is the fact that they hold such intercourse, a sufficient ground for the continual ringing of the charge that they are pro-slavery, and that through them, the churches of the North are countenancing the system of oppression?

If you choose to call the holding of such intercourse a connection with slavery, then I admit the existence of a connection. Indeed, there is, undeniably, a kind of connection. But is it an *unjustifiable* connection? Is it one which involves an approving, a fellowshipping of the system? I contend that it is not. I contend that our churches are *not* in fellowship with slavery. What are the facts in the case? Our churches are distinct, complete, independent bodies in themselves, subject to no human ecclesiastical authority; and being thus ecclesiastically distinct and complete, one church is not to be held responsible for evils which exist in another, especially if she lifts a voice of remonstrance, and exhortation to repentance. Such is the position of a congregational church in regard to this matter. Is the position changed, by an association of its pastors with pastors of slaveholding churches? Here, too, I enquire what are the facts in the case? Briefly these: I am pastor of this church. I am connected with an association of neighboring ministers. This body sends delegates annually, to a still larger body, viz. an association of all the orthodox congregational ministers of Massachusetts.

This General Association appoints delegates to the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, and their delegates are appointed in return. These are the facts. Now I ask you, the members of this church, do you feel that you are accountable for the existence of slavery in a portion of the Presbyterian church, or do you feel, that as a church, or as individuals, you are fellowshipping slavery, because the ministers of Massachusetts choose thus to associate themselves for mutual improvement, and to interchange ministerial courtesies with a body, some of whose members are slaveholders? Does conscience smite you on this account? If there be, in this way, *any* fellowshipping of slavery, it is done by the pastors, and by them alone. We come then to the question whether the pastors of the churches of Massachusetts, are fostering slavery by such association? and whether they are bound to refuse christian courtesies to the Presbyterian pastors of the South and West? And my answer to these questions, is an emphatic NO. I take the ground that there are true, and faithful, and successful, and acceptable ministers of Jesus, as there are private christians at the south, and in connection with the bodies under consideration, and therefore they are to be recognized as such. I take it, furthermore, that if our delegates go remonstrating against the abominations of slavery, they thus free themselves, and all whom they represent, from all unjustifiable connection with slavery. And this they have done. This very year, our delegate to the Old School Assembly went charged with the presentation of the following resolution, viz:

"Resolved: That in maintaining correspondence and connection with the two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian church, we look with deep and fraternal solicitude upon the position of those bodies with respect to the sin of slavery;—that our strong sympathies are with such

brethren in those Assemblies as are laboring in an earnest and christian spirit, to put an end to this evil;—that we desire our delegates to those Assemblies in a decided and courteous manner to express our deep conviction, *that the rights of the enslaved, the cause of true religion, and the honor of the Great Head of the church, require those ecclesiastical bodies to use all their legitimate power and influence for the speedy removal of slavery from the churches under their supervision.*" This resolution, embodying the sentiments of the General Association upon this subject, was presented. And it is but a repetition in different phraseology, of sentiments previously expressed.* It is therefore utterly ungenerous and untrue to assert that our ministers are in sympathy with slavery. It is most illiberal to make the body responsible for the opinions of any two or three of its members, however eminent they may be. As one of the associated clergy, I deny the right of any one, or any number, to call that body the bulwark and defence of slavery, because we see fit to treat christians as christians, while at the same time, we are careful to reprove them for their evil deeds. For one, I am not in fellowship with slavery. I disfellowship it, altogether.

4. In order to be free from the charge of countenancing

* "The General Association of Massachusetts, having often and earnestly expressed their abhorrence of slavery, grieving that the system has yet existed and is sustained by some Christians and Ecclesiastical Bodies as authorized by the Word of God, do solemnly reaffirm their faith; that the Word of God is utterly opposed to slavery as it exists in these United States, and that, as far as the Bible obtains the ascendency in the conscience and heart of Christians, and of the Church, such Christians must and will separate themselves from all responsible connection with the system; and, in the spirit of fraternal fidelity, we would earnestly beseech all Christians and Ecclesiastical Bodies connected with that system, to be living examples of the Gospel, and in the light of God's truth carefully to review their opinions and practice, and to do their utmost to free the Church of Christ from the pollution of this guilt."—9th page of the printed Minutes of the Association for 1845.

and fellowshipping slavery, must the church refuse to lend her sympathy, and prayers, and pecuniary aid in the cause of foreign missions, *because we have heathen at home?* It is true, that there are nearly three millions of heathen in our own country, but there are six hundred millions in other lands. It is true that slaves have souls, precious, immortal, sinful souls,—souls that must repent or perish; but three millions of slaves' souls are no *more* precious than the same number of Chinese or Nestorian souls. It is true that we ought to remember the slaves, and pray that they may enjoy the preaching of the pure gospel, but these three millions should not enlist all our sympathy, and prayers, and alms, while we forget the six hundred millions who are equally guilty, and equally immortal. I would pray for the slave, in common with all others who are in distress and destitution of the gospel, but I know of no warrant for praying for him alone.

We cannot introduce our missionaries among the slaves. Anti-slavery societies, and anti-slavery missionary societies have never done it, and for the reason that it cannot be done. Shall we therefore refuse to send missionaries where they can be introduced? Shall we refuse to listen to the cries of the pagan world, because there are slaves at home? Where in the Bible is a charity, limited like this, inculcated? Christ told the disciples to go into all the world,—not to stay at home because there was slavery there.

But perhaps you object to the missionary board, into whose treasury our churches have been accustomed to send their contributions, on the ground that it has a wrongful connection with slavery. To this objection I would reply, if you cannot let your rills of benevolence pour into *this* channel, then, in compassion to the dying heathen, by your remembrance of the Saviour's agony and death, and of your own covenant vows, seek out another society to which

you can give aid, that so the perishing in pagan lands may live.

But let us inquire as to the connection of the A. B. C. F. M. with slavery. The principal objections to it, are three, and these I will briefly notice.

The first is, that the Board receives "the price of blood," into its treasury. It is true that the Board receives monies from all parts of the country,—from the South as well as the North. But in so doing, the Board no more countenances slavery, than does that anti-slavery merchant whose vessels lie at Southern wharves, and come home laden with the products of the negro's toil, or that anti-slavery shoemaker who sends to the South his cargo of shoes, and receives for them the price of blood. Many of the bitterest opposers of the Board are doing this,—are eating and wearing the products of slave labor,—are receiving money directly from the South, and even putting that same price of blood, into what they regard as a *pure* missionary treasury. Has that money become purified while in their hands? Is it not as much stained with blood, as before? Perhaps every dollar you may now possess, was originally earned by a slave, but are you bound to refuse to receive and use it, until you have first ascertained whether such be the case? Not at all, and neither are our benevolent societies bound to institute an inquiry, when a contribution comes, whether it has not had some connection with slavery, and if so, to reject it. Paul directs to buy what is sold in the market, asking no questions for conscience' sake, although much of that meat had been offered to idols. Partaking of it was not countenancing idolatry, provided the partaker knew not that it had been so offered, and he was not to inquire how that might be. Nor can it be reasonably demanded of the American Board, that it should inquire into the source of all its funds. Paul says, "If any

man *say* to you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not." So, if one should *say* to the Treasurer of the Board, "I have just sold a man and here is his price, which I bring to you," *then* it could not be received without sanctioning that sale.

I cannot, therefore, consider the above objection valid.

It is urged, again, that slaveholders are admitted to the mission churches under the care of the Board. It is true, that among the Cherokee and Choctaw Indians, some such admissions have taken place. This subject has been virtually considered in another place, and for essentially the same reasons before presented, I would now say that this fact does not justify a withdrawal of patronage from the Board I would that there were no slaveholders in the churches, but the Missionaries, who were best qualified to judge in the case, saw fit to receive them, on the ground of penitence and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, this fact should not forfeit to the Board, the confidence and support of the christian community; for, under the circumstances, it seemed to be best,—best for master and slave, best for the church and the cause of Christ,—that the giving up of their slaves should not be made a test of discipleship.

The chief remaining objection to the Board, is that slave labor has been hired by some of the missionaries. Among the Choctaws there have been a few such cases. There was much manual labor necessary to be done, and not being able to procure free, white laborers, the missionaries were obliged to avail themselves of slave labor, to some extent. The Board however disapproved of the practice, inasmuch as it did seem to lend countenance to the system of oppression, and more than two years ago, sent a long communication upon the subject, to the mission. From that letter, I make the following extract. "In this state

of things, it appears to be our duty to ask you, first of all, to inquire once more into the supposed necessity of this practice, and to see if slave labor cannot, in some way, be dispensed with. And if you can discover no method by which a change can be effected, we submit for your consideration, whether it be not desirable to request the Choctaw government to release us from our engagement in respect to the boarding schools. It is with pain that we present this alternative, but such are our views of duty in the case, that we cannot suggest a different course."

Such is the extract. The result is, that only *one* slave is now employed, and doubtless the labors of that one will soon be dispensed with. Another Board has repeatedly declared that it can never sustain any relation to slavery, which implies approbation of the system. It appears to me, therefore, that a heart filled with love and forbearance, and warm with a true missionary spirit, can reasonably ask of the Board nothing more. It is an anti-slavery Board, and does send out an anti-slavery gospel, as purely so as that proclaimed by any other organization.

There is an additional consideration, which I deem of no little importance. It is the fact that God, the God of Liberty, and Righteousness, and Truth, and Love, does most signally bless this Board. Its successes are most wonderful. They at least equal the success granted to any other organization. The Holy Spirit is all over the field, gathering in a rich harvest of souls. Now, so long as God thus sets to the Board the seal of his approbation, I think we may venture to favor and support it, without a fear that we shall thus cherish the system of slavery.

III. If the church, as a body, does not come up to what an individual member regards as the standard of duty, in feeling and action upon this subject, what is that man's duty as an individual?

Is it his duty to leave the church? What good will that do? Whom will it benefit? Whom will it convince of his error? It can do no good to the slave. On the other hand, it will do him much harm, for the hope of the slave is in the church. It is the spirit of the gospel, pervading the hearts of men, that is to melt the bondman's chains, and break off his fetters. But the church is the repository, the defender, and the extender of the gospel. This she was appointed to do; this she has done, and this she is doing; and in God's own time Christianity will remove every form of evil, and fill the world with freedom and love.

If the church, therefore, is *not* right, surely it is the duty of those individuals who *are* right, to stay in it, and endeavor to set it right. If they labor unsuccessfully, they will be acquitted,—they have nevertheless discharged their duty. Even if the church, as a body, *were* fellowshipping slavery, if we, as individuals, disfellowship it, and labor untiringly for its removal, we shall stand acquitted at the bar of conscience, and at the bar of God. Far better is it to remain, and even suffer a little for conscience' sake, and hope, and wait, and pray for the dawn of a better day, than to break away from our holy and eternal covenant; from the communion of saints, and from all the sacred ordinances of religion, when such a course can do no good, but must do much harm to the cause of the slave, and the cause of Christ universally.

My hearers, I have done. I have freely spoken my sentiments. You may not approve of them. I do not expect you all will. It would be a miracle if you should. I have spoken warmly,—some of you will say fanatically, while others will think me far behind the position which I ought to take. I pray you now to remember, *that you all differ from me as widely as I do from you*, and whether you are

willing or not, to tolerate my views, I cheerfully tolerate yours. However applicable any thing which I have said, may be, to any in this audience, I repeat it, that I have not intended my remarks as personal for them. I think that there are views somewhat prevalent in our churches, which are fatal to all personal growth in grace, and enjoyment of religion, as well as detrimental to the prosperity of Christ's cause, and the cause of humanity. Therefore I have spoken as I have.

And now, may God forgive all that has been wrong in spirit and in word; accept and bless all that has been true and sincere; guide us all in the way of duty; free the bondman; convert the pagan, and gather us all at last in one eternal home in Heaven. Amen.

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